

Corps partners with others to restore marsh islands

By JoAnne Castagna Ed. D

Recently, the Corps has focused its attention on restoring the degrading marsh islands in Jamaica Bay, N.Y. Sand has been dredged from the Rockaway Inlet in the Bay and placed on the runway of the former airport at Floyd Bennett Field.

The sand is to be used to restore the rapidly degrading marsh islands in Jamaica Bay with the project scheduled to take place in the summer of 2006.

The marsh islands and surrounding area are part of the Gateway National Recreation Area. Since colonial times, 90 percent of the marsh islands have been lost, due to a variety of causes.

According to the National Park Service, the remaining 1,000 acres of islands are disappearing at a rate of 50 acres per year.

In cooperation with the National Park Service, New York City Department of Environmental Protection, Port Authority, and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, New York District decided to use sand dredged from the Rockaway Inlet to restore two of the marsh islands — Elders Point Island and Yellow Bar Island. The District's New York Harbor Deepening Program will also contribute several thousand cubic yards of sand.

The area is visited by millions of people each year as a place for recreation. It is also a nesting place for migrating birds as well as nurseries for fish. The marsh islands counterbalance

global warming and urban pollution by trapping carbon and chemicals and buffers homes from storm and wave damage.

According to Stephen Couch, of Planning Division, the sand will be used to raise the elevation of the islands to reestablish a low marsh habitat which will in turn restore the island's wildlife habitat.

"The sand is compatible with the composition of the marsh islands," said Joseph Olha, a Corps project manager. "This past winter approximately 182,943 cubic yards of sand was dredged from Rockaway Inlet."



Photo: National Park Service

The Corps has focused its attention on restoring the degrading marsh islands in Jamaica Bay. It is also used as a nesting place for migrating birds and nurseries for fish.